



Letter in Support of HB203
Ohio House of Representatives
State and Local Government Committee

June 9, 2021

Chair Wiggam, and Members of the Committee,

HB203 is very similar to a bill that our Nebraska legislature is considering this year. As our organization has tried to move the bill through committee, we ran into opposition from the electrical trades. Coincidentally, a young man named Michael Beyer contacted us, and I'd like to share his story briefly.

Mike Beyer graduated from the Bridgeport Public Schools high school. Bridgeport, Nebraska, has a population of 1500. As in many states with significant rural components, our leaders constantly try to convince our young people to consider staying in their hometowns (or return after college or military time).

Mike took that to heart. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy, was trained as a construction electrician, worked as an electrician at Camp David, and served two tours in Iraq as the lead electrician for a SEAL Unit.

During his eight years of Navy service, Mike looked ahead to his post-Navy life and entered into a service-to-work apprenticeship for electricians. After four years, he earned his journeyman electrician's certificate from the Department of Labor.

Upon release from the Navy, Mike returned to his hometown, married his high school sweetheart, and went to the electrical board to take the journeyman's licensing exam in Nebraska. It was there he was told that his eight years in the military, including the four-year apprenticeship, would give him credit for ONE year of experience toward his training (four years of apprenticeship experience are required before one can test in Nebraska).

Mike returned home, married, started his family, and hoped to work in the field in which he trained, but was faced with three more years as an apprentice rather than being able to move immediately into a journeyman's position. Financially, he couldn't afford that, so he took a job as an electrical lineman with his community—but didn't give up on his dreams.

Early this year, Mike contacted us. Once we learned of his story, we brought it to the media's attention, and his story was told in the two largest papers in the state and on radio and television stations around the state.

After significant media pressure, the electrical board rethought their position based on Mike's experiences and documented apprenticeship. They allowed him to take his journeyman's licensure exam in early May—and two weeks ago, Mike notified me that he had passed and received his license!

The story ends well for Mike Beyer. But we can all agree that workers shouldn't have to have their stories told by the largest paper in the state to be given a chance to work.

Bills like HB203 are popping up all over the country—and being passed into law. The attached graphic demonstrates just how widespread this movement is. We believe that this is a movement that will continue to grow, but the comparative advantage to adopting universal recognition will be with those states who adopt sooner rather than later and use this to entice a skilled workforce to their state before someone else does.

HB203 would help those returning from military service and those who may have civilian experience in their occupation in other states who might seek to move to Ohio to work. We encourage you to advance it from the committee.

Respectfully,

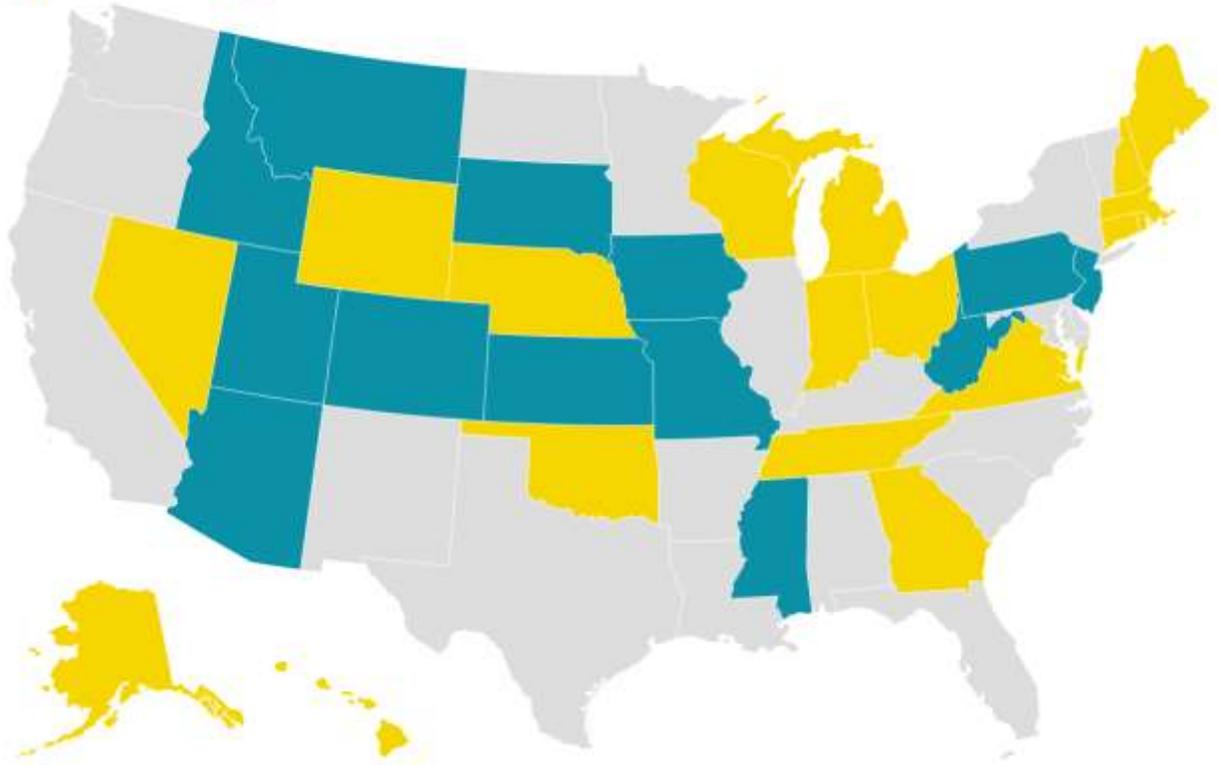
/s/ Laura Ebke

Laura Ebke, PhD
Senior Fellow
Former Nebraska State Senator

Universal Recognition Legislation

Current status of universal recognition in the U.S.

Introduced 2021 Passed



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